This course surveys the key aesthetic and technological developments from the ‘invention’ of photography in 1839 until its transition to digital in the 1990s. We will examine the ongoing debate about whether photography is a mechanical science or a fine art, gain an understanding of the chemical and optical discoveries that provided constant challenges to photographers and the reasons why photography was a largely an amateur, rather than a professional, activity until the twentieth century. Assessment consists of a mid-term and a final, and an exhibition proposal enabling students to delve deeper into those particular aspects of photography they find most fascinating.